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**JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE**  
**JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL**

**PREPARING COMMANDERS TODAY, FOR COALITION OPERATIONS OF**  
**TOMORROW.**

by

**Andrew Malcolm Gordon**

**Commander, Royal Australian Navy**



**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.**

**This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes.**

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**18 June 2010**

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*When you go home, Tell them of us and say, For their tomorrow,  
We gave our today.*

## ABSTRACT

Leadership training of the military commanders of today is outdated and in need of rejuvenation. The training concentrates on the issues associated with commanding troops from your own country or state. The problem has arisen that, for the near future, fighting will be with a coalition of like-minded forces. Command of a coalition requires additional personal traits that are neither well understood nor developed routinely in commanders today. A comparative analysis of three historical coalition commands identified three required traits. First, was the ability to understand differences between partners in a coalition. The second personal trait identified was the ability to communicate intentions, concepts and requirements effectively. The last personal trait identified was the ability of a commander to think critically about information presented to them. The development of the identified personal traits will enhance their ability to conduct coalition operations successfully. The development needs to begin with junior officers to ensure they are prepared for the future.

## INTRODUCTION

Leadership training of the military commanders of today is outdated and in need of rejuvenation. The training concentrates on the issues associated with commanding troops from your own country or state. Many capable commanders have undertaken this type of training, and the design has been refined because of many experiences. The problem has arisen that, for the near future, fighting will be with a coalition of like-minded forces. Command of a coalition requires additional personal traits that are neither well understood nor developed routinely in commanders today. The traits need identification and developing as personal traits of future commanders to ensure that differences between forces do not defeat the combined force. This will ensure future success.

The reason for a change to coalition warfare is rooted in how a country progresses to war. Countries now have to consider two factors when determining if there is to be armed conflict. The political and economic factors are now so great that countries actively seek partners to fight with in order to gain political legitimacy and to defray the total costs involved. There has been a transition in thinking from single state versus state to coalition versus protagonist. The idea of a coalition is to bring together forces for a common end but there are difficulties in determining the best method to achieve this. This comes about because no two countries have identical requirements or understanding of issues. It is my assertion that, by analysing previous coalition commanders, and identifying what personal traits made them successful the results can develop coalition commanders of the future.

A comparative analysis approach of three historical case studies will be undertaken. With each case study, a brief outline of the operation will lead to an examination of the development of the commanders. How others perceived them and

an analysis of their coalition command completes these sections. An assessment of the operations outcomes and an analysis of what personal traits of the commanders influenced this outcome complete each case study. Recurring or individually significant traits will be the foundation for future commanders to build on. The analysis in the final chapter will suggest ideas on how best to take these traits and shape the future.

The first case study will be the Northern Front of the Burma-China-India theatre in World War II (WWII). It was one of the first modern coalition operations, had a complex command situation and it is worthy of study. When careers were analysed, the Allied Land Forces commander, Field Marshal Slim and the U.S. and Chinese armies commander General Stilwell, showed many similarities in their progression. They both had very traditional educations and experiences to the General officer rank. Yet in command of this large and diverse coalition force, their personal command traits had as much if not more influence on the ultimate success of the campaign than those command traits common to all senior commanders. The situation they faced was a mired strategic position for both, due to political and national requirements that had to compete with military interaction issues.<sup>1</sup> This required them to be able to communicate effectively, have understanding of their compatriots and be critical thinkers. These were significant in the ultimate success that each had in this campaign. Given the complexity of the situation, and the successes enjoyed, this study offers an excellent example to analyse.

The second study looks at the European campaign after the breakout from Normandy up to the arrival at the Rhine River. This campaign had the largest

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1. Duncan Anderson, "Slim and the Exercise of High Command in Burma," in *The Challenges of High Command: The British Experience*, ed. Gary Sheffield and Geoffrey Till, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 83.



coalition force assembled in WWII and had numerous operational highlights and problems. The ultimate outcome of the operation came close to dismal failure due to the conduct of the senior commanders in a coalition environment. General of the Army Eisenhower and Field Marshal Montgomery both had a role to play in this situation. Yet it was still a success.<sup>2</sup> Although there were some significant errors by both in standard military matters, there are personal traits that rose above this and gave the Allies ultimate success.

The final case study is a recent non-combat operation, the entry of NATO troops in support of a United Nations sponsored ceasefire in Kosovo. This case study validated the traits previously identified as still credible in a different and more recent type of operation. Although the operation itself called for little or no military use of force, there was a coalition force used as peacekeepers. The political dimension of this coalition influenced the two commanders, General Clark and General Jackson. It again showed the value of understanding and clear communications skills as well as the usefulness of critical thinking. Despite all the problems, this was still a successful operation. It validated the traits that are required to lead in a coalition, which again are in addition to those common to General officers.

The case studies identified important personal traits of coalition commanders that can assist in identifying and training coalition commanders of the future. Developing this into a plan that remains useful in the future and becomes part of the training of future commanders is the final step in the process. To lead a modern coalition force successfully, the commander needs skills developed specifically for this so they can effectively operate with their partners.

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2. David Irving and John Cawdell, *The War between the Generals* (New York: Congdon & Lattès, 1981), 2.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE BURMA CAMPAIGN NORTHERN FRONT

### **The Operational Background**

To understand the case study, a quick overview of the operational situation and people involved will frame the discussion on what traits helped success in this coalition. This operation takes place as a part of a greater theatre of operations in World War II (WWII). The Allies in Asia were holding a defensive line against the Japanese along the Burma-China-India (BCI) border. This line had campaigns in three areas of operations, the Northern Front near the Indian Chinese border, which will be analysed in this study. The second was the Central Front in India's Assam province, which was in the middle of the line and the centre of Japanese opposition. The final was the Southern Front in the Arakan region, which had already seen significant operations by the time operations on the Northern Front commenced. Although important, there will be no discussion of the Central and Southern Fronts in this paper.<sup>1</sup>

Many have described the Northern Front campaign of the BCI theatre of WWII, as the most isolated of the theatre. It was however, one of the strategic campaigns and one where the desired outcomes of each coalition partner differed. During operations on the Northern Front, there were complex command relationships in the theatre. Stilwell was Deputy Supreme Commander under Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten in the South East Asian Allied Command. He was also Commander in Chief Chinese Forces and Commanding General of United States Forces China Burma India. Slim had overall command of the land operations in the Burma theatre,

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1. Ronald Lewin, *Slim: The Standardbearer: a Biography of Field-Marshal the Viscount Slim* (London: Cooper, 1976), 145.

which included those of Stilwell. Although it appeared an illogical command structure to military minded people because Stilwell was senior to Slim, it was one based on personalities and would have surprising success.<sup>2</sup>

On this front, the land bridge from India to China was the strategic imperative. This would relieve the pressure on allied air transportation and vastly increase the tonnage of equipment flowing into China. The way to achieve this imperative was a point of friction between the British General Slim, and the United States General Stilwell. Slim believed the reopening of the Rangoon – China road best did this and this necessitated the defeat of the Japanese in Burma. Stilwell believed that victory in Burma was “incidental to the reopening of land communications with China, and need be pursued only to the limited extent necessary for that purpose.”<sup>3</sup> Although the commanders in the field had these potentially opposing concepts for achieving the strategic imperative, when the Anglo-American Combined Chiefs of Staff decided on the construction of a road from Ledo, Assam to Kunming, China as the method to open this bridge up, they were overruled.<sup>4</sup>

The make up of forces on this Northern Front reflected the true coalition nature of the front. The British forces consisted of British, Gurkha, West African and Burmese units. The U.S. forces had U.S. trained Chinese units and an irregular infantry unit officially named the 5307 Composite Unit (Provisional). Initially called Galahad, but later known by its most popular name “Merrill’s Marauders.”<sup>5</sup> Directly

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2. Viscount William J Slim, *Defeat into Victory: Battling Japan in Burma and India 1942-1945* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 205-207.

3. Ibid., 249. Stilwell was himself under pressure from fellow Americans as to how the war should be fought once the bridge was established, but this will not be pursued in this paper.

4. Ibid., 250-251.

5. Shelford Bidwell, *The Chindit War: Stilwell, Wingate, and the Campaign in Burma, 1944* (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 61.

opposing these forces were the 18<sup>th</sup> Japanese Division. The plan for the front was relatively simple: move sufficient forces into the region to protect the air bridge between India and China and to cover the building of the Ledo Road. To achieve this, U.S. Chinese forces would move from the north down the Hukawng Valley with a Long Range Patrol Force of “Chindits” operating behind enemy lines, cutting communications and disrupting supply.

The initial advances in by Chinese troops in October 1943, made some gains but stalled in November against increasing opposition from the Japanese. After attending the Quebec Conference and meetings with senior Chinese officials, Stilwell returned to his forces in the Northern Combat Area Command on 21 December 1943 and immediately set about forcing his troops to fight.<sup>6</sup> After a series of minor successes, most personally led by Stilwell, the Chinese force was gaining not only a tactical but also a strategic advantage over the Japanese. In March 1944, the Chinese force was massing for an attack on the capital of the Hukawng Valley, Maingkwan. The success of Chinese and U.S. forces in this battle saw the first two significant phases in Northern Front completed.<sup>7</sup>

Following the initial thrust from the north, the Chindits operations behind enemy lines was the next supporting phase of the front. The plan consisted of landing in four assembly places: Aberdeen, Piccadilly, Broadway and Chowringhee.<sup>8</sup> From here, the force was to conduct operations, with the objectives:

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6. Fred Eldridge, *Wrath in Burma; The Uncensored Story of General Stilwell and International Maneuvers in the Far East* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & company, inc, 1946), 190.

7. Ibid., 219-228.

8. John Masters, *The Road Past Mandalay, A Personal Narrative* (New York: Harper, 1961), 336. This is a copy of the Operation Order for 111 Indian Brigade's movement into the area of operations.

- (i) Helping the advance of Stilwell's Ledo force on Myitkyina by cutting the communications of the Japanese 18<sup>th</sup> Division, harassing its rear, and preventing its reinforcement.
- (ii) Creating a favourable situation for the Yunnan Chinese forces to cross the Salween and enter Burma.
- (iii) Inflicting the greatest possible damage and confusion on the enemy in North Burma.<sup>9</sup>

As they caught the Japanese by surprise, this force had considerable initial success. After eleven days of operations, the first task was complete. This forced the Japanese to take action and they formed Take Force from the 53<sup>rd</sup> Japanese Division to deal with the Chindits. At the same time, a plane crash killed the Chindit's commander Major General Wingate and Brigadier Lentaigne relieved him. As the Chindit's operations continued behind Japanese lines at considerable physical cost, a relieving force flew into the area of operation, completing the insertion by 4<sup>th</sup> April 1944. As this was happening, the main Japanese advance had occurred in the central front and the Battle of Imphal was underway.<sup>10</sup> The Chindits fought many significant pitched battles against Take Force and their operations continued in pursuit of the assigned tasks.

The final phase of the Northern Front operations continued with a drive towards Myitkyina, the Chindits still supporting Stilwell's forces. The Chindit's had not been retasked to support the main Assam front and were now closing in on Myitkyina, as such they were placed under direct command of Stilwell. The battle for Myitkyina proved to be a long drawn out siege. It provoked many arguments about level of support and diversion of effort but it fell on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1944 and the first

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9. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 259.

10. Ibid., 267-268.

stage of Stilwell's campaign had ended.<sup>11</sup> Given this brief overview of the operations, it is now opportune to understand how the two commanders developed and how they handled operations in this coalition environment.

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11. Ibid., 281.

## **The Commanders and their Relationships**

### **Field Marshal The Viscount William Slim of Yarralumla**

Field Marshal Slim had by all accounts a very plain entry into the British Army. He was originally a schoolteacher in Birmingham, England at a relatively poor school. Enlisting in the Officer Training Corps, he gained a commission in the 9<sup>th</sup> Royal Warwicks at the outbreak of World War I (WWI); in action at Gallipoli, he was badly wounded. During convalescence, he transferred to the regular Army in the West India Regiment and returned to work with his old regiment in Mesopotamia. Wounded again he was sent to India to convalesce. Post war he again transferred, this time to the Indian Army and the 6<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles.<sup>1</sup> Regimental life followed, but Slim had already had extensive operational experience in different theatres of war.

He spent his time in the Regiment either in the home depot or out operating on the North West Frontier. Of his time in the Regiment it was commented that what impressed of him was his capability of “maintaining strict discipline while spreading content, ‘commanding affection while communicating energy.’”<sup>2</sup> After spending five years with the Regiment, he posted to the Indian Army Staff College at Quetta, as a student. The officers selected for this course were “hand picked selection of potential high fliers – the Army’s future.”<sup>3</sup> His success on the staff college he served where his staff skills were useful. He posted to the staff at Indian Army Headquarters and then on staff at the British Army Staff College in Camberley, England. He gained selection as a student at the Imperial Defence College for the 1937 course during his time in

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1. Lewin, *Slim: The Standardbearer*, 28-35.

2. Ibid., 41.

3. Ibid., 47.

England.<sup>4</sup> On completion and promotion to substantive Lieutenant Colonel, he returned to India to take command of the 2/7<sup>th</sup> Gurkhas. He posted as Commandant of the Senior Officers' School at Belgaum, in 1939.

Well versed academically and with operational experience to back him, Slim started WWII in command of 10 Indian Brigade at Jhansi with all the main qualifications available to him.<sup>5</sup> Here Slim acquired further operational experience in Ethiopia and the Middle East. In March 1942, in command of Burma Corps, he conducted a forced withdrawal into India, one of the most outstanding retreats in military history. Further action in India followed as did reorganisations in the army, with Slim taking command of Fourteenth Army in August 1943.<sup>6</sup>

Given his background, and what people thought of him, distinctive command traits will now be analysed. People who served with and for Slim reported on and received him well. His background was classic military officer and he was well educated. Identified for higher rank and command throughout his mid ranks, he stood out from his peers. His ability to communicate to all levels stands out, as a writer for newspapers he was able to “express his thoughts cogently – which would later make his speeches and broadcasts so effective – was not the least of the attributes which struck his contemporaries.”<sup>7</sup> He was not prone to immature thought and took the time to ensure that his thoughts were relevant to his troops. In Slim's own words, “I felt there was only one way to do it, by a direct approach to the individual men themselves. Not by written exhortations, by wireless speeches, but by informal talks

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4. Ibid., 58.

5. Ibid., 63.

6. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 168.

7. Lewin, *Slim: The Standardbearer*, 52.



and contacts between troops and commanders.”<sup>8</sup> This communication was also evident in how Slim commanded and what he expected of his commanders in the field. Having to undertake operations that were over great distances and with limited numbers also meant that he had to make sure that his subordinates understood the nature of his intentions for as he explained:

Commanders at all levels had to act more on their own; they were given greater latitude to work out their own plans to achieve what they knew was the Army Commander’s intention. In time they developed to a marked degree flexibility of mind and a firmness of decision that enabled them to act swiftly to take advantage of sudden information or changing circumstances without reference to their superiors.”<sup>9</sup>

This approach to commanding manoeuvre warfare is mission command. In stressful situations as Army Commander, Slim did not let emotions overtake him. Having learned this through personal experience in Ethiopia he ensured that he remained logical not passionate when crisis eventuated.<sup>10</sup> An incident at the start of the Chindit operations describes this. Wingate was visibly distressed by reports of fouled landing areas, in what appeared to him to be a betrayal of the operation. Slim remained “inscrutable and rock like in his imperturbability”<sup>11</sup> and ensured that all logical steps were taken. Throughout his command in the region and of coalition forces Slim was very conscious of the differing requirements and strains people were under. His relationship with Stilwell best describes his understanding of the people he commanded and the issues that they faced. Noting Stilwell was his superior, Slim made sure never to issue Stilwell an order; instead, Slim took time to discuss his

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8. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 184.

9. Ibid., 541-542.

10. Lewin, *Slim: The Standardbearer*, 67. Slim had experienced his force break under fire whilst commanding a brigade in Gallabat Ethiopia in 1939.

11. Bidwell, *The Chindit War*, 106. This incident has supporters and detractors of Slim’s conduct. The quote used is from Brigadier Tulloch a supporter of Wingate and was used because he had no personal reason to over state Slim’s role in the incident.

requirements with Stilwell in person.<sup>12</sup> Slim was also acutely aware of the competing priorities that Stilwell faced from the Chinese and elements within his national command. Slim always made a point of supporting Stilwell in both actions and words. Having looked at how Slim developed his command style and how he approached command in a coalition environment, the next person discussed is Stilwell.

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12. Eldridge, *Wrath in Burma*, 186.

## General Joseph W. Stilwell, USA

General Stilwell joined the United States Military Academy in 1900 and graduated in 1904.<sup>1</sup> His initial posting was to the Philippines where he remained until 1906. Selected to return to the Academy as an instructor in languages he spent the next four years teaching there.<sup>2</sup> Whilst on leave during this time he spent his time abroad in Central America learning languages and gaining an understanding of different ways of life.<sup>3</sup> Returning to regimental life in the Philippines, he spent his next leave exploring Asia and had his first experience in China. Whilst in China he saw first-hand the rebellion in Wuchow, gained his initial understanding of the Chinese people, and saw the birth of modern China.<sup>4</sup> Returning with his Regiment to the US, he posted to the Academy to teach, remaining there until the outbreak of World War I (WWI). During WWI, he gained experience in training an army he could use again later in life, and operational experience as an intelligence officer. He did not gain any experience in direct combat.

After WWI Stilwell applied for and was successful in studying language and follow on as an assistant Military Attaché to China.<sup>5</sup> This was the first of three postings to China, where until World War II (WWII) he was to spend a total of ten years, the last four as Military Attaché.<sup>6</sup> It was during this time that he developed a

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1. Joseph Warren Stilwell and Theodore H. White, *The Stilwell Papers* (New York: W. Sloane Associates, 1948), ix.

2. Barbara W. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American experience in China, 1911-45* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1971), 21.

3. Ibid., 21-23.

4. Ibid., 38.

5. Ibid., 62.

6. Stilwell and White, *The Stilwell Papers*, x.

deep understanding of not only the “Chinese military system but also Chinese history and culture as a whole.”<sup>7</sup>

Between his postings in China, Stilwell attended the Army Infantry School and the Command and General Staff College in 1926.<sup>8</sup> Posting back to China as a Battalion Commander and then Regimental Executive Officer of 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, he returned to the U.S. in 1929. On return, he went to the Army Infantry School as the chief of the tactical section. Here the future Chief of Staff of the Army, Colonel George Marshall, reported that he was “ahead of his time in tactics and technique.”<sup>9</sup> Returning to China as Military Attaché, he encountered the Japanese Imperial Army and was witness to the Japanese invasion of China.

When discussing commanders in the Burma theatre, Stilwell provokes the most emotive of responses. In analysing how others perceived him, emotion has not been included except where it is part of an important historical point. Slim liked him and said “he was a first-class battle leader up to, I should say, Corps level and an excellent tactician, but a poor administrator.”<sup>10</sup> Slim also made mention of Stilwell’s distrust of the British which “was deeply rooted, and on what grounds I could not discover.”<sup>11</sup> Many of Slim’s superiors and subordinates failed to see what Slim did and their perceptions mirrored Stilwell’s of them.

In looking at how he handled coalition command, understanding the situation facing Stilwell is important. As the then, General Marshall wrote of Stilwell in his Biennial Report covering the period 1 July 1943 to 30 June 1945:

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7. Bidwell, *The Chindit War*, 30.

8. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American experience in China*, 90.

9. Ibid., 125.

10. Lewin, *Slim: The Standardbearer*, 141.

11. Ibid., 142.

He faced an extremely difficult political problem and his purely military problem of opposing large numbers of enemy with few resources was unmatched in any theater.<sup>12</sup>

Regardless though, his relationships with others became a hindrance in his ability to communicate his commander's intentions. This also manifested itself in his written orders and the "staff work of Stilwell's headquarters, as its lamentable performance throughout the campaign was to show, was inept."<sup>13</sup> This situation was even worse as he was by nature deeply pessimistic as evidenced by his writings; this did not provide a proper environment for a commander.

He was however, a man who had a deep understanding of coalition troops. Of the forces underneath him, it he "had a correct appreciation both of the Chinese political situation and of the value of the Chinese military potential."<sup>14</sup> This was to prove invaluable in taking his force from an untrained group and training them to become an effective fighting unit. His experiences in France and at home coupled with his understanding and personal courage culminated in Slim describing him as "a real leader in the field; no one else I know could have made his Chinese do what they did."<sup>15</sup>

The commanders in this theatre had differing experiences in developing their styles of command. Others perceptions of them differed in some regards, but were similar in others. They both displayed the usual command traits required to be lead at a senior level; however, both Slim and Stilwell had particular traits that stand out and these are important in how they commanded in this situation. What the operation

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12. War Department General Staff United States, *Biennial report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army: July 1, 1943, to June 30, 1945, to the Secretary of War / by General of the Army George C. Marshall* (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1946), 59.

13. Bidwell, *The Chindit War*, 91.

14. Ibid., 31.

15. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 51.

achieved in a strategic sense can now be analysed and an assessment made of the traits relative contribution to the achievements.

### **Operational Achievements**

The Northern Front campaign commenced with the advances from Ledo Assam in October 1943 and finished when Myitkyina fell in August 1944. To look at what had been achieved it is best to look at the various forces involved, then the overall achievements on the front and then the achievements on the Northern Front in light of the overall campaign.

The U.S. and Chinese forces under Stilwell fought the campaign in three phases. The first phase was the initial push into Burma conducted from Ledo, the Chinese Army base in India. In November 1943, this phase was to establish a larger safety corridor around the building of the Ledo Road. Led by Chinese troops and Chinese Generals it quickly turned to stalemate by what Stilwell believed was “General Sun’s failure to maneuver aggressively.”<sup>1</sup> As was mentioned before Stilwell had to assume command in the field. This stalemate also meant Stilwell had to think again about his use of the Chinese troops, and he subsequently revised their employment in the field. He used the incoming reinforcements to ensure that they always had a numerical advantage when attacking the Japanese. As Slim described, “He, also was an advocate of the sledge-hammer to crack a walnut, at this stage. He saw to it that if a Japanese company was to be liquidated, it was attacked by a Chinese regiment.”<sup>2</sup> They also had excellent air supply that increased their mobility against an

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1. Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *China-Burma-India Theater, Stilwell's Command Problems* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1956), 123.

2. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 254.

enemy which did not have this advantage. Strategically the Chinese gained confidence in fighting and they freed a major slice of Burma from the Japanese. It was also strategically important as it brought Stilwell into the field to command operations. These successes flowed into the second phase, which was the move down the Hukawng Valley.

This phase was an operational and tactical success. The Chinese fought well and made continued advances against the Japanese. They did not achieve the destruction of the Japanese, which should have occurred. Overall, its importance lies in that success here removed any opportunity for higher command to cancel operations in the Northern Front and reaffirmed that the Ledo road plan was the objective.<sup>3</sup> This opened the way for the push to Myitkyina.

The initial aspects of this phase mirrored the second and the increasing effectiveness of Chinese troops was important. The phase quickly bogged down in the siege of Myitkyina, which lasted for over two months. Although the final capture was a strategic success, it also so severely depleted his U.S. troops that they were ineffective after it. The local gains for the first victory limited to the value of finally establishing a safety corridor for the construction of the Ledo road and protection of the air bridge.

The British forces had very similar experiences in the conduct of their operations. In relation to this operation, the early success helped give impetus to the campaign. They achieved the initial objectives rapidly and then the plan faltered. That is not to say they were not a triumph of “stoicism over appalling adversity”<sup>4</sup> nor personally heroic; just the expectations of them were never realised. To look purely at

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3. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 203.

4. Bidwell, *The Chindit War*, 284.

their objectives, only one was completely achieved by their efforts. There are many reasons for this, including the Japanese commencing an offence against the British in Assam. Most importantly, they did not succeed because nobody knew how to use the force correctly and they had expectations placed on them that were unrealistic. The ability of the columns to manoeuvre over harsh terrain hampered them. They had, “great strategic but little tactical mobility.”<sup>5</sup> This was the reason the expectations were unrealistic. Personal views cloud the descriptions of the use of the Chindits and why? History has since shown the world the advantages on long-range patrols and irregular warfare. They were simply too far ahead of their time.

It is now important to look at how all these successes and failures influenced the overall campaign. Significantly, the campaign achieved its requirements. The Northern Front established a safety corridor for the Ledo road construction. The campaign achieved the required end state. It gave the Allies the first significant victory over Japanese land forces and recaptured a large piece of land. It allowed the flow of supplies into to China to increase significantly. The successes the U.S. achieved with Chinese troops gave the U.S. greater political and military leverage with China. This was vital because it allowed them to influence the Chinese to take the offensive and open the Yunnan Front in April 1944.<sup>6</sup> This in turn meant that the Japanese could not put more troops against the other Burma fronts thereby minimising the effectiveness of troops already there. The other success is far more idealistic and has little empirical data to support, nor does it have many personal anecdotes that attest to it. In the writings of Slim, Stilwell and Mountbatten there was a determination to ensure that the coalition operations were a success, despite the

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5. Ibid., 284.

6. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 329-331.



differences of opinions and occasional clashes of personalities. In a world in which this type of operation was new, this is telling.

The influence in changing opinions and shaping future coalition operations are the most outstanding, strategic successes of the campaign. As it was amongst the first coalition operation with complex command arrangements and differing priorities it highlights valuable lessons from the commanders on how they achieved the success.

### **What Made it a Success?**

In looking at the commands of Slim and Stilwell there are certain traits applicable to both that are common to all officers who make Flag or General rank. The discussion will be on only those that are unique to either or both of these two men.

Slim had a number of traits that stand out. First, his ability to remove emotion from an argument coupled with the fact that he was extremely well read and educated meant he was able to undertake critical thinking when faced with an issue and arrive at reasoned well considered decisions. Critical thinking is valuable in any organisation but in this case, it was integral when as the Burma Front commander he faced multiple competing entities. He used it to make the decision regarding the initial infiltration of Chindits.

His ability to communicate with others also meant that, as the commander people were well aware of his requirements, generally extremely well framed. This also meant that he could exercise mission command and let his subordinates exercise initiative in the face of rapidly changing situations. It also meant that every person in his team was able to contribute to the overall success. This was vital in an area where communications were poor, distances large and terrain unforgiving. It also meant that

subordinate commanders who may come from differing backgrounds and have different expectations were not in any doubt regarding their commander's intent or expectations. It also reduces the problems arising from a lack of understanding by coalition commanders of the processes, as they have the end state to achieve, not the minutia of how to achieve it.

The last important piece is the understanding that Slim had of his compatriots and subordinates. This was vital because in understanding the coalition and the pressures faced he was then able to influence it. Although it draws on his communication skills and his critical thinking, it is also the result of a vast experience working with people who had different requirements to his. Commanding a Gurkha Regiment is not something natural to any Englishman and it is something he developed over time. It was invaluable in achieving success in the coalition and it allowed him to have a much better understanding of the people and the issues facing them. The pressures and influences of Stilwell's multiple commands could easily have been lost on others, but Slim was able to understand this and factor it into any decisions he made. By understanding Stilwell, he also ensured that potentially difficult problems arising from the illogical command structure never occurred. He was able to influence Stilwell because he understood him.

Stilwell also had some traits that were vital in commanding a coalition. He too had a developed sense of understanding and he used this to great effect with the Chinese. As was stated most of what they achieved is significantly due to Stilwell and his ability to influence his environment.

Stilwell's communication skills were not good and this affected his ability to command in the coalition environment. For the same reasons that Slim achieved

success, Stilwell nearly failed. At times people did not understand his requirements and these caused difficulties in the coalition.

Finally, Stilwell combined his prodigious education and intellect with his ability to work in complex environments to overcome his emotiveness and was capable of deep critical thinking when analysing the issues. Although he used a different personal trait to achieve it he also arrived at balanced and reasoned decisions when faced with complex situations. His only failure was his inability to communicate them to others outside his sphere.

The Northern Front of the Burma China India theatre faced many difficulties as one of the earliest coalition operations. The commanders were both influential in determining the outcome of the campaign. This success can be attributable to personal traits that led them to be successful in a complex coalition environment and ultimately lead the coalition to victory against the Japanese. The next case study will look at a larger coalition operation to determine if there are similar traits that led to success.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE RACE TO THE BORDER: FALAISE TO THE RHINE

#### **The Operational Background**

The European campaign started with the invasion of Normandy by Allied forces in June 1944. During this campaign, the best example of coalition leadership having to compete with differing national, political and military goals is after the breakout from Falaise, during the period 18 August and 15 September 1944. Out of the entire campaign, it shows coalition leadership under trying times operating with differing tactical, operational and strategic goals also competing with the egos of the commanders. The key commanders in this period are the Supreme Commander Allied Forces Europe, General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower and Commander of 21 Army Group (and for a period commander of all Allied land forces) Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery.

After being bogged down in the immediate region around the Normandy beachhead this period covers the breakout and push to the German border and the link up with Allied forces from southern France. The speed with which this occurred “raised the hopes of the Allies and led them to believe that quick victory before winter was in their grasp.”<sup>1</sup>

The German retreat from the Falaise pocket saw a considerable number of men escape without much of their heavy equipment before the pocket closed on 18 August 1944. There were also significant signs appearing of the German Army becoming increasingly demoralised. The Allies saw this as an opportunity to continue

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1. Forrest C. Pogue, *United States Army in World War II. The European Theater of Operations: The Supreme Command* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1954), 244.

with the attack and attempt to deny the Germans the ability to regroup or strengthen defences. The Germans maintained a disciplined withdrawal and their efforts focused on delaying the Allied advance while they strengthened the West Wall (Siegfried Line).<sup>2</sup>

The initial Allied advances after 18 August saw a rapid movement eastward by elements of 12<sup>th</sup> Army Group who were almost unopposed as they made large gains towards Germany. The opposed, slower movement northeast towards Belgium by 21 Army group was also underway. By 25 August, the Allies had cleared German forces on one side of the Seine River, liberated Paris and establish a frontline that extended east towards Germany.

The Allied commanders were considering the options for an advance to the German border through France and Belgium. Prior to the invasion, the general Allied plan was from the general direction of the Seine River, to move towards the Ruhr because of its vital economic importance to Germany's war effort. The plan was for the advance to be over a broad front and with considerable time for build up of forces and supplies. The speed with which the German forces retreated caused this to be re-evaluated and the army group commanders presented Eisenhower with revised plans. These plans emphasised speedily moving Allied forces to destroy the Germans before they could organise a better defence of Germany, but both concentrated on only moving in one direction.<sup>3</sup>

The plan chosen by Eisenhower concentrated his forces on remaining true to the original plans for a broad movement towards Germany. He used the forces current disposition and decided that Bradley's 12<sup>th</sup> Army Group would advance beyond Paris

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2. Ibid., 246.

3. Ibid., 250.

to south of the Ardennes before attacking the Ruhr. Montgomery's 21 Army Group would move northeast extending the front through Belgium and into the Netherlands and then come down to the Ruhr. In order to achieve the approach Eisenhower had to give priority to one line of attack initially due to the limited amount of supplies, particularly petrol, available to move his forces. He chose the northeast line of operation for a number of reasons. Firstly, this move would potentially allow greater access to deep-water ports moving the entire supply chain from the vulnerable initial beachhead to secure facilities and ensuring a continuous supply of provisions, fuels and stores. Secondly, German forces in the Pas-de-Calais were utilising flying bombs and rockets to attack England. The British saw destruction of these sites as vital to the maintenance of morale at home.<sup>4</sup> Finally, this approach would establish the broad front along which he wished to attack Germany. To achieve the attacks Eisenhower had to divert the majority of his supplies to 21 Army Group and temporarily allocated the First U.S. Army from 12<sup>th</sup> Army Group to ensure success. The operations continued with Montgomery moving north and Bradley moving east as far as his supplies would allow.

By 15 September 1944, Montgomery had not opened the ports of Antwerp or Rotterdam to Allied shipping and his forces advance had stopped in northern Belgium and at the German border. To the south, Bradley's forces had halted short of the German border but could not proceed due to logistical constraints. The momentum of the Allied advance had slowed, and a consolidation needed to ensure a build up of supplies and maintenance required for such a massive force. Allied forces were to try

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4. Ibid., 251.

one last effort to continue pushing the Germans back but the failure of Operation Market Garden in the Netherlands meant that consolidation was the priority.<sup>5</sup>

There has been much said about the influence of various commanders on the conduct of the operations during the period 18 August to 15 September 1944. The two significant commanders both had individual traits that had some bearing on commanding the largest ever coalition force and it is appropriate to now consider both of the individuals.

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5. Ibid., 288.

## **The Commanders and their Relationships**

General of The Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, USA

General Eisenhower started his military career in 1911 at the United States Military Academy and graduated in 1915. Posted to an infantry unit he spent his initial posting in Texas undertaking the routine of a military in peacetime. Having not been involved in the action against Pancho Villa in 1916, he thought he might be involved in some fighting when the U.S. entered World War I in 1917. This was not to be, assigned to a training unit he prepared others for the fight in Europe. In training others, he developed personal leadership qualities that were to stay with him for life.<sup>1</sup>

Post War he continued his career and his personal development. In 1919, he volunteered to be part of a test of the Army's capabilities to move across the country. This expedition was just the first in a number of different situations Eisenhower placed himself in, to satisfy his enquiring mind. From the expedition, he developed concepts on how to move large numbers of people but also learnt about the capacity of war to change with the introduction of more rapid transport.<sup>2</sup> On completion of the tour, he joined the fledgling Tank Corps and applied his mind to exploiting the new technology. In 1922, he moved to Panama to continue his normal progression. It was here that he met his mentor, General Conner, who developed Eisenhower through education and practice. Eisenhower revelled in the relationship and expanded his knowledge greatly he learnt to look "at a problem from every angle rather than from

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1. John F. Wukovits, *Eisenhower* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 15-29.

2. Ibid., 32.



just one perspective and to consider all the alternatives.”<sup>3</sup> Eisenhower had learnt to think critically about information provided and to understand the differing perspectives presented to him, both traits that were to serve him well in later command. Returning to the U.S. in 1925 Eisenhower attended the Command and General Staff College and the Army War College to continue his education.

Chosen to write a guidebook for the sites of WWI battles, Eisenhower continued to expand his understanding of other peoples when he lived in France away from the military for a year. On return to Washington, his career undertook a series of staff appointments working predominately for General MacArthur. His career followed MacArthur to the Philippines to develop the new military there. He quickly developed friendly relationships with the people and government of The Philippines a trait that was to serve him well in later years.<sup>4</sup> On return to the U.S. in 1940, he commanded a battalion and quickly prepared the unit for war. He moved to work as the Chief of Staff of a new Division, again his ability to train impressed others as did understanding of the value of positive public relations a new concept in the Army of 1941. He had established himself as a capable officer of great intellect and he moved back to Washington to work as a staff officer again. From this post, he eventually was selected as the commander of European Theater (sic) of operations and eventual as Supreme Commander Allied Forces Europe.<sup>5</sup>

Given his background, some personal traits of Eisenhower stand out. Firstly, he was a man possessed of a large intellect, and his training under Conner and at military schools prepared him to understand issues at hand and analyse them by

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3. Ibid., 38.

4. Ibid., 46.

5. Ibid., 68.

thinking critically about the issue. Additionally, throughout his career he was a person who fostered relationships. When he was tasked with writing a mobilisation plan for the U.S. Army in 1930, he was praised by the head of the Army, MacArthur, for his “ability to compress such a complex issue into a concise summation, and he marveled (sic) over Eisenhower’s talent for working with industrialists.”<sup>6</sup>

Eisenhower was also a man who could communicate easily with others. One of his own principles was “persuasion...came from sound logic and organized thought.”<sup>7</sup> In both the written word and in talking to people Eisenhower ensured others clearly understood his point of view.

The level at which people trusted Eisenhower to come up with valid plans, communicate them and execute them as a coalition commander reached across all commands and countries. He took this into coalition command where he also used his skills at negotiating and commanding to great effect. The Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, General Marshall saw this and noted:

in Ike Eisenhower was a unique combination of an aptitude for strategy and strategic planning, a talent for logistics and organization, and an extraordinary ability to work with others – to get along with them, to persuade them, to mediate among them, to direct them, to encourage them, and to correct them. And there was more. Ike was no small-talker or glad-hander. He was all business.<sup>8</sup>

Having looked at how he developed as a person and how this influenced his coalition command it is time to look at the other commander of note Montgomery.

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6. Ibid., 42.

7. Ibid., 55.

8. Alan Axelrod, *Eisenhower on Leadership: Ike’s Enduring Lessons in Total Victory Management* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 10.

## Field Marshal The Viscount Bernard Law Montgomery of Alamein

Field Marshal Montgomery joined the British Army in 1907 and on graduation from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst moved to India with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. At the time, the British Army was trying to professionalise its officer corps and Montgomery was keen to understand what he called the military art.<sup>1</sup>

Montgomery gained valuable operational experience in World War I (WWI) being amongst the first to see seeing action. Wounded and evacuated to England, once recovered he returned to the fighting in 1916 as a staff officer concerned with running the battle as opposed to fighting it. Montgomery used his experiences in fighting and running a war to good use later in life. After the war, he followed a traditional career path for an army officer. In 1920, he continued his professional education and quest to understand the military art with attendance at the Staff College at Camberley. Besides the need for education, he also understood the need to question and analyse his work. Of his education he wrote, “it seemed to me that it was *trained* common sense which mattered. I must admit that I was critical and intolerant; I had yet to learn that uninformed criticism is valueless.”<sup>2</sup>

Following Camberley, Montgomery saw service in Ireland during the struggle against Sinn Fein and then returned to England and more staff appointments. In 1926, he returned to Camberley as an instructor and in his memoirs, he highlights a significant part of his own development. He came to the realisation that “the teacher

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1. Bernard Law Montgomery of Alamein, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein* (Cleveland: World Pub. Co, 1958), 30.

2. Ibid., 36.

learns much more than his students.”<sup>3</sup> After Camberley, he had command of a battalion and then he moved as the Chief Instructor at the Staff College, Quetta with a promotion to Colonel. Throughout this period, Montgomery had been developing his knowledge and the ability to question the status quo in order to provide a better outcome to an issue. He was to use this to very good effect in a few years time.

Montgomery started World War II in command of a division on their way to the front line in France. He was to fight in the disaster that was the British Expeditionary Force and then gain further experiences in North Africa and Italy before returning to England to lead the ground forces in the invasion of Europe. Montgomery’s excellent practical experience had prepared him well for coalition command, and he was well educated in the ways of conducting wars. It would be useful to see what others thought of him as a commander.

Like most of the world’s great commanders Montgomery has detractors and supporters. Most people consider him to have been an excellent field commander; the greatest difference of opinion comes when people consider his relationships with others. Those who knew him well considered that “his affection, once bestowed, was for life; but it never blinded him.”<sup>4</sup> The level of single-mindedness that he displayed was cause for friction with others. After a meeting during the operation, Eisenhower wrote, “A discouraging revelation was Montgomery’s intransigence, which augured poorly for close military coordination in the next several weeks.”<sup>5</sup> In building a

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3. Ibid., 38.

4. Nigel Hamilton, *Monty: Final Years of the Field-Marshal, 1944-1976* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1986), xxiv.

5. David Eisenhower, *Eisenhower: At War 1943-1945* (New York: Wings Books, 1991) 423.

picture of his ability as a coalition commander, what effect he had when in command of a coalition needs to be analysed.

The command of Allied ground forces transferred from Montgomery to Eisenhower on 1 September 1944. With this handover, the extent to which he disagreed with the broad front approach became more obvious. Until then the breakout had occupied those underneath him and the drives across France were just beginning. He was vociferous in defence of his plan to drive north to the Ruhr. His deep understanding of the conduct of war also came to the fore. In his own words, he described the situation as “A commander of national forces is always within his rights to make clear his views...But once his superior commander has given his decision, there can be no further argument.”<sup>6</sup> His single mindedness however, caused Eisenhower to spend an extraordinary amount of time to ensure that Montgomery understood the plan. Montgomery relented and pushed forward with the overall Allied plan once he understood Eisenhower’s decision. Having looked at the operation and the commanders, the outcomes of the operation will provide a basis to see if personal traits influenced the outcomes.

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6. Montgomery of Alamein, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein*, 313.

## **Operational Achievements**

The drive towards Germany after the Normandy landings commenced with the closing of the Falaise pocket and ended with the halting of the operation in the Netherlands and along the German border. In looking at the achievements of the period, the overall Allied position needs to be analysed from a strategic perspective. In comparing the Allies achievements against the original plans, the problems encountered offer an excellent strategic overview of the operation. From this, the reasons behind some of the decisions made by Eisenhower as the Allied commander bring to light the work he did in keeping the coalition together.

The speed with which both 21 Army Group and 12<sup>th</sup> Army Group raced across France surprised most. Few had thought that the Germans would so readily retreat as far as they did and unfortunately, neither did the planners for the operations in Europe. This caused the problems that Eisenhower faced as the Allied Commander. His combat forces were moving faster and further than his support forces could cope with. The original plan for reaching the Seine River was close in that it was two weeks after the actual date the U.S. 3<sup>rd</sup> Army reached the river on 20 August 1944. The original date planned for reaching the German frontiers was seven months out from the actual date of 11 September 1944.<sup>1</sup>

The conduct of operations in such a rapidly changing environment has been the topic of many historians and commanders post the events of 1944. Eisenhower even sought plans from his own commanders on the best way to pursue the operation. The biggest problem with all of these plans was that they did not consider the effect

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1. Pogue, *United States Army in World War II. The European Theater of Operations: The Supreme Command*, 257.

on the overall Allied plan, which was the only one that included a strategic appraisal of the logistics required to keep such a large army in the field conducting operations.

The three key aspects mostly forgotten from this period are:

- a. the need for deep water ports to replace temporary ports and increase the arrival of vital stores,
- b. the lack of specialised troops to provide the military infrastructure behind the front lines over a rapidly changing front, and
- c. the unexpected drain on resources caused by liberating large centres of population such as Paris.

The implication of these on the overall Allied plan provides the reasoning behind some of Eisenhower's decisions and the operations eventual outcomes.

The need for deep-water ports had been a driving factor in the plans for operations in Europe. The emphasis placed on securing access was evident in all Eisenhower's decisions. He was willing to support the movement towards the Netherlands because it opened up the port of Antwerp. This was a good alternative to those ports originally chosen and allowed the Allies to amend their plan in light of the new situation. When 21 Army Group failed to secure the port rapidly, Eisenhower reverted to the original options, which meant that resources went back to this option.

The lack of specialised support troops was an unintended consequence of the rapid advance. These troops build fuel pipelines, man repair depots and construct forward airfields, all of which support the troops fighting on the frontline. The speed of advance routinely outstripped the capacity of these troops to provide the requisite level of support. The 12<sup>th</sup> Army's drive through France was spectacular for its speed

but lacked the depth of support it required. To ensure proper support behind the front line, the advance slowed.<sup>2</sup>

The need to provide support for the increasingly large liberated French population was well beyond that expected by the planners. Eisenhower could not ignore the requirement due to the importance of the mission, yet it drew resources from the front lines.

All of these issues affected the provision of support and the allocation of priorities by Eisenhower. Critics cite the lack of resources towards a particular tactical situation as a reason for a perceived failure of the Allies to achieve an objective. It is the direct opposite. The careful management of resources in rapidly changing situations is one of the great successes of the operation. It also required Eisenhower to be at his best in commanding a coalition with differing perceptions and requirements. The simple fact is that the Allies had pushed the Germans back well beyond where they had originally planned and there was now a need for an operational pause to allow the logistics train time to provide for future operations.

The other aspect of this success is that despite the logistical problems and the national requirements that faced the commanders, the largest allied force to take the field of battle had achieved objectives well before expectations and was now poised to achieve final victory.

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2. Ibid., 256-259.



## **What Made it a Success?**

As with the previous case study, this section will not look at the traits common to all senior officers rather, it will concentrate on those particular traits of the two men that gave them the edge and made them successful in their environment.

General Eisenhower had a number of traits that came to the fore in the operations. Although his detractors malign the fact that he had never commanded in combat and that his command experience was very limited, it became clear that these were not essential because he had developed in other ways that proved just as necessary. First among them was his ability to understand others and foster harmonious relationships. Throughout his career, Eisenhower took positions or tasks considered outside the normal career path of his contemporaries. His experiences in an army transportation test, involvement in pioneering tanks, writing of a battlefield tour, working with industry and in the Philippines all gave him a different perspective and greater understanding of others. In leading a great coalition of forces that had differences at political, strategic, operational and even tactical levels, Eisenhower's ability to bring them all together was essential for the coalition to be victorious. He emphasised a unity of effort through cooperation and this was essential in choosing the best plan, out of those presented, for achieving overall victory during the race to the German border.<sup>1</sup> History has given credit for this choice.

Just as important as his understanding and essential in getting his message across to all partners, Eisenhower was a great communicator on a personal level. This came through his prolific personal correspondence with his commanders in the field and in his constant meetings with them. Eisenhower subscribed to the theory that "A

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1. Axelrod, *Eisenhower on Leadership*, 281.

qualified commander should normally be assigned only a general mission...and then given the means to carry it out.”<sup>2</sup> In doing so successfully, he had to ensure that his subordinates understood his requirements so that confusion did not erupt.

The last trait that contributed to the overall success of the operation was his ability to analyse critically work presented to him. With opinions and plans presented to him that represented differing political, military or even personal viewpoints, Eisenhower had to determine which offered the best option. It was his ability to think critically about issues, which allowed him to identify all the factors that were influencing the operation and to determine what was essential and what was not.

Field Marshal Montgomery also had personal traits that added to the success of the operation. He too was well educated and had experiences that developed him to think critically about operations. His planning for Eisenhower was of the finest quality, at the operational level it showed great presence of mind and outwitted the enemy. He understood the political dimensions and after the war Field Marshal von Rundstedt said, “Strategically and politically, Berlin was the target.”<sup>3</sup> Although Montgomery’s plan was operationally likely to achieve success, he did not take into account the full range of issues that faced Eisenhower in the entire theatre of operations. Once appraised, a second trait came to the fore. Montgomery knew when to stop presenting his case and follow the orders of his superiors. Many have written on how to lead people and to gain cooperation, but it takes a certain trait to understand when to follow despite actual or perceived problems. Although Montgomery had national interests to promote, he also understood the necessity of a unified effort including when to stop offering his advice. This meant that Eisenhower could

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2. Ibid., 57.

3. Hamilton, *Monty: Final Years of the Field-Marshal, 1944-1976*, 3.

command without national interests dominating his decisions, this was vital in the overall success of the Allied coalition.

The breakout from Falaise to the German border has often been described from individuals viewpoints, most of which are disparaging to others involved. In reality, it was a stunning success with a rapid transition from precarious foothold on a continent to the borders of the enemy. When you look at the successes of the operation, the individual traits of the commanders were factors in achieving ultimate success. The next case study moves away from traditional warfare and into recent history. It does not however lose anything in this; in reality, it highlights the modern issues facing coalition commanders.

## CHAPTER THREE

### KOSOVO 1999

#### **The Operational Background**

The situation in the Balkans had deteriorated after the breakup of the former Yugoslavian states during the 1990's. In 1998, this deterioration continued in the Serbian region of Kosovo. In this year open ethnic conflict erupted between Serbian military and police forces and Kosovo Albanian forces causing widespread deaths and displacement of the Kosovar Albanians. There was considerable concern over the humanitarian consequences this could pose and in October 1998, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) authorised military airstrikes to support diplomatic efforts to force the Serbians to leave Kosovo, bring peace to the region and allow the Kosovars to return to their homes.<sup>1</sup>

The threat of air strikes forced the Serbian leadership to acquiesce, and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) established a verification mission in the region. Peace did not last long and despite ongoing diplomatic efforts, the mission was withdrawn on 20 March 1999, as they could no longer continue their mission. NATO at this stage had as its senior military commander General Wesley K. Clark, U.S. Army. Serving in the dual role as the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and as the Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command (CINCEUR) caused some interesting command challenges during the operations. NATO aircraft commenced bombing operations on 24 March 1999. Until air operations ceased on 10 June 1999, NATO flew approximately 38,000

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1. Larry K. Wentz, *Lessons from Kosovo: The KFOR Experience* (Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2002), 17.

sorties to prosecute their aims under Operation Allied Force.<sup>2</sup> There was considerable planning taking place for potential land operations but due to intense pressure in Washington, U.S. planners were not involved. NATO air operations ceased when Yugoslav forces withdrew in accordance with a Military Technical Agreement between NATO and the Yugoslav Republic. On the same day, the United Nations (UN) Security Council passed a resolution to “deploy international civil and security presences in Kosovo, under United Nations auspices.”<sup>3</sup>

The NATO land component would be the international force used to provide the security presence. This force had actually been in Macedonia since mid March 1999, utilising NATO’s Allied Rapid Reaction Force (ARRF). This force, commanded by British General Mike Jackson, was a standing headquarters with troops added when necessary. Four NATO countries, Britain, France, Germany and Italy, provided troops for this operation and it was renamed Kosovo Force (KFOR). Normally this headquarters was under the operational command of SACEUR however; for the operation, KFOR was under “NATO’s Commander in Chief Southern Europe (CINC-SOUTH), who in turn reported directly to SACEUR.”<sup>4</sup> As this force came together in Macedonia, there were U.S. units operating in Albania conducting relief operations, and a separate unit in Macedonia working under a UN mandate. During the air campaign, this land force dealt with refugees, and at the end, the command was heavily involved in the negotiating of the Military Technical Agreement.

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2. Ibid., 19.

3. Ibid., 23.

4. Mike Jackson, *Soldier: The Autobiography of General Sir Mike Jackson* (London: Bantam, 2007), 233.

The date for withdrawal of Serb forces and the transition to a UN sponsored security force provided by NATO was set for 12 June 1999. At the last minute, Russian forces operating in nearby Bosnia changed these plans. The movement of the Russians was a political move designed to mitigate the impact of a NATO force providing security in a former Communist country that had looked to Russia for security.<sup>5</sup> It had a far greater destabilising influence and caused significant political and military dealings between NATO and Russian leadership. The major concern of NATO leadership was the possibility of Russian occupation of northern Kosovo in order to establish a partitioned state.

The political concerns almost forced the cancellation of the movement of KFOR into Kosovo, but at the predetermined time operations continued. The NATO troops used for the operation all had dual if not more lines of command with which to contend. Not only were they operationally under the Commander KFOR but they also had to have approval for their operations from their national commanders. All of this came to the fore during the move into Kosovo as national political requirements came into conflict with military requirements. General Clark saw the Russian forces as a threat to the operation; as SACEUR, he ordered KFOR to stop the movement of further Russian troops into Pristina airfield. The problem was that his view differed from the commanders on the ground and more importantly differed from the views of the other nations involved in the operation.<sup>6</sup> After significant political manoeuvring, the situation was resolved and KFOR continued the operation without any further changes to the plan. KFOR established control of Kosovo providing a security presence under UN mandate. Having looked at the background to the land operations

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5. Ibid., 256.

6. Ibid., 270.

in Kosovo, next to be analysed is the development of the commanders and seeing how they handled operations.

### **The Commanders and their Relationships**

#### **General Wesley Kanne Clark, USA**

General Wesley K. Clark entered the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point in 1962. His time at the USMA was significant and he established himself as an academically gifted officer who strived for success in all his pursuits including debating. After graduating as valedictorian, he continued with further studies as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. After completing a second degree in philosophy, politics and economics, he commented that he “came away from Oxford with an education. I had lived in another culture...”<sup>1</sup>

On return to the United States, he completed military courses and a short time working as a junior officer. In July 1969, he went to Vietnam where he served on the divisional staff of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. In January 1970, he assumed command of A Company 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry (Mechanised) his first real command experience in the army.<sup>2</sup>

Wounded in battle in February 1970 and repatriated to the U.S. he then underwent a period of convalescence. He then completed a series of short postings including command of a company of tanks, undertaking his Advanced Course and a

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1. Wesley K. Clark and Tom Carhart, *A Time to Lead; For Duty, Honor and Country* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 80.

2. Ibid., 85-90.

secondment to the Pentagon, prior to his return the USMA as an instructor in July 1971.<sup>3</sup>

After three years at the USMA, which included a second secondment to the Pentagon, he attended the United States Army's Command and General Staff College, at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. On completion, he undertook a White House Fellowship for a year, which was his first exposure to "government processes from the very top."<sup>4</sup> His year as a fellow exposed him to a variety of situations and peoples, experiences from which he was to learn much.

Further postings in Germany in a battalion and on the personal staff of Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General Haig, continued his development. His report from SACEUR commented on his:

personal qualities and professional attributes which uniquely qualify him as a soldier-scholar... he projects soldierly qualities of strength, character, leadership, and above all an unyielding sense of personal responsibility. It is this sense of responsibility which clearly sets him apart from his contemporaries. [He] has the intellectual, moral and physical stamina, coupled with an unrelenting quest for excellence, which insures the completion of every task to near perfection.<sup>5</sup>

The drive for perfection that had started with his studies as a junior officer became evident in his command style as a senior officer. In February 1980, he assumed Command of a battalion. His time studying and in headquarters and his operational experiences were now used in his first large command experience.<sup>6</sup> He was a successful commander and early promotion to Colonel occurred as a result. He undertook studies at the National War College and then worked in Headquarters,

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3. Ibid., 101.

4. Ibid., 110.

5. General Haig, "Highlights in General Wesley Clark's Military Record," WESPAC – Securing America's Future, <http://securingamerica.com/highlights> (last accessed March 1, 2010).

6. Clark and Carhart, *A Time to Lead*, 117.



Department of the Army. Overlooked for brigade command twice during this period, he commenced working at the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California. Brigade command eventually came and on completion, he returned to training ending up as the Brigadier General in command of the NTC.

Promoted to Major General he worked in Training Command before commanding the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division. Promoted to Lieutenant General after divisional command, he worked as the Director of Strategic Plans and Policy on the Joint Staff in the Pentagon. His work here in developing the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's military perspective and communicating it to others brought to fruition his extensive education and exposure to processes in Washington throughout his career, and it gave him his first experience in the Balkans.<sup>7</sup>

Promotion to General and command of Southern Command preceded his appointment as Commander in Chief European Command, which was his position at the commencement of operations in Kosovo.

When looking at how the commanders in Kosovo performed, Clark's performance as SACEUR evokes unexpected responses from those who he served, and who served him. Academically brilliant and well reported on, he also had a very strong sense of responsibility, which caused him to argue for his plan even if there was no higher-level political or military support. This led to a situation when he appeared to advocate a forceful entry into Kosovo despite this not being the preferred option of the U.S. Government. Clark received guidance directly from the Secretary of Defense to "Get your.....face off the TV, No more briefings, period."<sup>8</sup> This determination to proceed with a plan despite no higher support also caused concern

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7. Ibid., 164.

8. Jackson, *Soldier: The Autobiography of General Sir Mike Jackson*, 241.

amongst his subordinates and coalition commanders, who had to come to terms with his personal drive and attention to detail. Others could also perceive it as a person seeking the limelight. Although this approach had defined his style throughout his career, it was now clouding communication between himself and his subordinates; Clark's inability to see that it was affecting his command was inexcusable.

Despite difficulties by doggedly pursuing his appreciation and failing to communicate his requirements to superiors and subordinates, Clark did have a well-rounded mind that had both academic rigour and political experience to help him think through the potential issues that he faced. His years of working at all levels of national politics meant that he clearly understood who in coalition governments had to be engaged as part of the overall plan for participation in operations. At this, he was a success utilising his close personal relationships with European leaders to ensure they were collectively supportive of the coalition operations in the Balkans. He was a successful strategic commander though less so as an operational commander.

Having analysed Clark's preparation for and execution of coalition command, it would be useful now to analyse his subordinate, General Jackson.

### General Sir Mike Jackson

General Sir Mike Jackson is the son of a soldier and joined the British Army in January 1962 at Sandhurst. Having graduated he proceeded to take up his Corps posting in the Intelligence Corps and was subsequently sent to Birmingham University to undertake a degree in Russian Studies.<sup>1</sup> Having completed his undergraduate degree he returned to the Army and the Parachute Regiment (Para's) in

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1. Ibid., 24.

August 1967. It was during this initial time with the Para's that he had the first of many formative experiences that he used to great benefit later in his career. While in Hong Kong (HK) he was sent as a watchkeeper to the headquarters, a joint Police Military organisation (POLMIL), giving him his first experience in working with a civilian agency.<sup>2</sup> Later in Northern Ireland, he gained further invaluable experience in handling civil internal unrest and terrorism. He had a first hand appreciation of what can go wrong with his involvement in the "Bloody Sunday" riots of 1972.<sup>3</sup> He also developed academically attending the Army Staff College and in completion posted to Berlin. Here he gained further experience in coalition operations and international relations dealing with French, Russian and American units as well as NATO command structures.<sup>4</sup> On completion, he again solidified his understanding of civil affairs during a posting back to Northern Ireland as a company commander. Undertaking further education at the National Defence College, on completion he returned to the Staff College as a member of Directing Staff (DS). In the British Army, this is considered an excellent job and as Jackson states "DS consist of, dare I say it, some of the sharpest officers of this rank."<sup>5</sup> After working within the Ministry of Defence and commanding a regiment, he was DS at the Joint Services Defence College. Further education at the Higher Command and Staff Course and a fellowship at Cambridge followed.<sup>6</sup>

On completion and on promotion to Brigadier he went back to Northern Ireland as a brigade commander where he gained further experience in civil military

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2. Ibid., 26-38.

3. Ibid., 68.

4. Ibid., 98.

5. Ibid., 129.

6. Ibid., 155.

affairs as this period was during the period of police primacy in running counter terrorism operations.<sup>7</sup> On completion, he returned to the Ministry of Defence as a Major General before commanding the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division in 1994. It was during his time in command that the Division was involved in the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia and latterly with the Implementation Force (IFOR) as the Commander of the Multinational Force Southwest. His time in command brought together his vast experiences in civil and military interaction as well as coalition in international relations. He finished his command when the division headquarters returned in 1996.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout his entire life Jackson comes across as a man determined to succeed and yet a man who commanded great respect and admiration from his subordinates. In his annual report from 1973, it was noted, “it is because of his extrovert nature and that he is so capable, he occasionally gives some of those less endowed the impression he is arrogant.”<sup>9</sup> The other side of Jackson was that he was a man who understood how to operate with other nations and more importantly with other peoples and organisations. On coming back from Bosnia, having worked with UN forces and government agencies, the British Secretary of State said he had “shown a remarkable degree of sensitivity and even handedness and had established excellent relations with all three communities.”<sup>10</sup>

When in Kosovo, in command of the land force that went in as peacekeepers, Jackson had to use all his skills to ensure that the force remained effective yet

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7. Ibid., 161.

8. Ibid., 200-216.

9. Ibid., 76.

10. Ibid., 214.

responsive to the requirements of the mission. His developed understanding of the political and civil requirements was used to great effect in negotiating with the Serbs and in deciding which course of action to take. Added to this was the civilian refugee crisis that developed and brought political oversight from governments keen not to repeat the problems that occurred in Bosnia. His handling of the constant stream of politicians and relief agencies showed a highly developed skill in understanding the problems of others. These same issues then combined with having to communicate to his superiors, subordinates and peers who were all from different nations with separate issues they were all working with. He was successful in ensuring that people were aware of his requirements and fixed issues. The skill and ability that he displayed in working communications channels was testament to his great education. Without it he would have floundered.

He also displayed an ability to understand all of the issues that were facing the force. The different countries of the coalition all had different perspectives on how to approach the situation and had varying restrictions on their forces. This posed a significant problem for Jackson to think through and overcome. He was very good at identifying where planning was going wrong and how to avoid the potential problems imposed by individual countries requirements. That he did all of this is testament to his overall ability in command of the peacekeeping force.

The commanders' experiences in developing their command styles have now been analysed and we identified personal command traits from this. In next identifying the operational achievements, we can assess the contribution these personal traits made to the achievements.

## **Operational Achievements**

The decision by NATO to bring peace to Kosovo needed both political and military options to achieve the outcome. Eventually after negotiation and use of force, the UN sponsored an agreement that had the Serb forces withdraw and a civil and security force replaced them. That this occurred is an operational success, but the way it came about exposed many of the weaknesses in modern coalition operations. The air campaign that forced the Serbs to the negotiating table is not a topic that will be analysed; the command and control developed during this phase will form part of the discussion. What will be analysed are, the performance, organisation and command of the initial NATO military force that formed Kosovo Force (KFOR).

The performance of the units that participated in KFOR is relatively simple. Given the plans that they had and the outcomes that were expected all performed well. Confronting uncertainty and difficult terrain they achieved all that was required in a professional manner. Peace returned to Kosovo, security provided for the people and refugees returned to their homes.

What does come out of an examination of the operation is a telling example of how command and control of a modern coalition force is challenging. The multinational force came together with little resolve to conduct ground operations.<sup>1</sup> A traditional organisational chart cannot explain the complexity of the construct that the operation produced. Although in appearance it was organised along normal military lines, the multinational force had to contend with significant national influences both military and political. These differences caused great challenges at all levels of planning and organisation. As an example of the significant political differences,

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1. Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War: Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Future of Combat* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), 350.

General Clark writes that although the U.S. wanted to plan on a purely NATO operation “for the NATO order, some nations required an authorizing U.N. Security Council Resolution.”<sup>2</sup>

Well before operations in Kosovo, NATO had designed the methodology and doctrine to enable countries to operate together. This doctrine’s use to define forces in Kosovo was the first time for an operation of significant size. Although doctrinally thought through, the organisation of the force was untried in a real world operation. What doctrine decreed to be an organised command and control structure logically assembled in a hierarchical manner had many nuances identified in the campaign. All participants accepted the traditional concepts of command. Less well understood was the impact of national command and just as importantly the influence of Washington in an operation the U.S. had deliberately stood back from.

National command occurs in coalitions where all nations although militarily under a designated commander, have the inherent right to refer to their own countries commanders if there are situations that go against the wishes of that particular country. It is a coalition-building piece, which creates greater cooperation between all partners. In the multinational NATO coalition in Kosovo, military forces had to contend continuously with NATO and their own countries higher headquarters. Added to this were the requirements of governments in the U.S. and Europe who all had significant stakes in the operation. The U.S. influence was essential, as they were the dominant world power, yet the NATO countries and NATO itself were providing the ground forces and had significant influence in the direction of operations. This unfamiliar and complicated organisation degraded the overall unity of effort. General Clark recounts that:

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2. Ibid., 355.

There were multiple lines of communications throughout the negotiations. I was communicating with the Pentagon and NATO headquarters on a minute-by-minute basis, responding to suggested changes but also trying to retain the minimum essentials for NATO... And Washington was working through White House channels with our NATO allies, The United Nations, and the Russians on details of the various agreements.<sup>3</sup>

The simple doctrine had suddenly become complicated and because it had not been encountered before or conceived of, it caused considerable pressures on the force commanders. This was to be an enduring lesson for future coalition operations.

Although NATO learnt many lessons from Kosovo, when the UN perspective is analysed it again proves the overall success of the operation. The UN mandate under UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) provided “to resolve the grave humanitarian situation in Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and to provide for the safe and free return of all refugees and displaced persons to their homes.”<sup>4</sup> Did the UN achieve its goal? The answer is yes, and although the speed of return and the massive number of refugees involved required particular planning the fact that the land operation by Kosovo Force allowed this adds to the level of achievement.

The operation is just one in a continuing and expanding number of coalition operations that are providing valuable experience in coalition operations. It is appropriate to analyse how the commanders influenced the new situations faced in Kosovo.

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3. Ibid., 368.

4. Wentz, *Lessons from Kosovo: The KFOR Experience*, B-1.



## **What Made it a Success?**

As in all the case studies, there are traits that are common to all great leaders and those that are specific to individuals. The search for those individual traits, which have bearing on coalition command, is the basis for this research.

In General Clark we identified personal traits that are in common with others who were successful in bringing a coalition together. There was also a personal trait, which drove the coalition apart. The effect this had on his performance as a commander deserves note as a caution to others.

Clark was an extremely well educated man who also had many experiences that his compatriots did not. His early time at Oxford was by his own words defining and gave him an early insight into how others perceived him and his work. He built on this when he worked as a White House fellow and he exposed to a completely different type of culture that again broadened his experiences. The time as a fellow exposed him to the highest levels of political power and the non-partisan approach that was necessary for consensus building. He saw the benefits and requirement for consensus building in order to be successful at the highest levels. He developed an understanding of the people around him in all situations. This came to the fore in his efforts to build consensus in the NATO alliance throughout operations in Kosovo. In a coalition that had such a diversity of political and military requirements from different nations his deft handling of the political and military leaders was due to his vast experiences in what was required for success in these situations. His efforts in achieving consensus in NATO have gone barely noticed yet they are one of the resounding success stories of the operation. The benefits of his experiences were essential to the overall success.

He also had difficulties with his own higher headquarters, which caused some issues within the coalition. The main cause for this was his driven determination that was a trait of his career. Having achieved success in bringing together the coalition in Europe, he failed to see that the planning he was doing was not consistent with his own countries wishes in the campaign. This disconnect meant he was at times working against his own efforts to achieve unity. Personal drive is a trait that needs checking by coalition commanders. A look at how General Jackson traits influenced the coalition shows some similarities with Clark.

General Jackson also had some early and lasting experiences with how politics is influential in any military operation and the need to seek consensus. He also developed an understanding of the difference in people. In his time in Hong Kong, the work in a joint civil military headquarters started his experiences with working for and with people of different backgrounds. During his time in Northern Ireland, he worked for civil authorities and actually within the civil organisation. He had these experiences throughout his career and it influenced him greatly. He found it particularly easy to develop relationships within the NATO command and with civil authorities. On one occasion when faced with a vitriolic female politician concerned about his lack of action in helping refugees, Jackson was able to bring to bear his abilities to seek consensus and defuse the situation. Jackson recalls that after this meeting, people who “had earlier heard raised voices coming from my office, were surprised to see her [the female politician] coming out grinning.”<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, Jackson had been a product of a long-term development methodology used by the British Army. Taking their best officers, they develop critical thinking by offering education and then the venue to develop their thoughts.

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1. Jackson, *Soldier: The Autobiography of General Sir Mike Jackson*, 240.

Well educated, he was Directing Staff at high-level military education facilities twice in his career. Here he was able to develop his critical thinking, the ever-changing student bodies and the differing opinions they had, constantly challenged his thoughts on events. He had to re-evaluate his thoughts constantly to ensure they were right. These same opportunities also meant that he had to be clear in his communications to the student bodies so that there were no misconceptions. The experiences he gained whilst on staff at the institutions served him well when he had to work through the plan to go to Pristina Airport. Jackson's superior Clark had ordered him to move forces to the airport to ensure that Russian forces would not secure the area. Jackson saw the consequences of these actions by applying critical thinking and developing an understanding of the effects. He also confronted Clark to make him understand the effects the move would have, and Jackson did so. Support for Jackson's actions came from all levels of command both military and political. This paved the way for a far better integration of Russian forces in the eventual mission.

The operations in Kosovo are a modern example of coalition at work. The success of the campaign was due to the successes of the commanders in different ways. The personal traits led to events that had positive outcomes for the overall success in what was a very complex political and military situation. There has been recurring traits in commanders that have made them successful in their endeavours. These along with the individual traits from the other case studies can now be analysed for future use.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE FUTURE OF COALITION OPERATIONS

#### **What Have we Learnt From the Past?**

The purpose in studying three different case studies was to identify personal traits of the commanders that were influential in achieving success in a coalition environment. The level of coalition involvement and the operational outcomes achieved provided the basis for which operations to choose. This was to eliminate other factors, besides personal traits, that may have influenced the outcome. In choosing operations with different outcomes and then comparing them, any recurring trait could be influential and something that future leaders may wish to understand and utilise. A short recap of what traits the different commanders had will lead this discussion.

The first pair of commanders studied was Slim and Stilwell. Slim was an educated and highly experienced commander when the operation started. The study showed that he was able combine his excellent education with control of his emotions to ensure that when faced with decisions he was able to think critically about the outcomes needed. He was an effective communicator, not just orally but in the written form also. This was essential on a front that covered vast distances and had poor communications. He was able to ensure that his message was clear to his subordinates and plans executed correctly at all levels. Lastly, he had a great understanding of his coalition partners and subordinates. This was to prove vital in understanding Stilwell and being able to ensure that the relationship produced the best outcomes. Stilwell also had a well-developed understanding of others and he used this to great effect with the Chinese, ensuring that they were effective in combat. He also combined his vast intellect with a proven ability to work in complex environments to ensure that when

he had to make decisions he had thought through all the possibilities and critically analysed the requirements. Stilwell did have a deficiency, in that he did not have good communication skills. This hampered his ability to ensure all the coalition forces he commanded understood his intentions, and reduced the overall effectiveness of his command. Similar recurring themes became evident in the next case study, which was on Eisenhower and Montgomery in Europe.

Eisenhower had a number of traits that came to the fore in the operation. First among them was his ability to understand others and foster harmonious relationships. This was essential given the size and nature of the coalition involved, and he needed to ensure that the relationships were always productive in working for overall victory. He was also a great communicator on a personal level. This meant that he could overcome egos and national requirements by ensuring that commanders understood completely what was required. The last trait that contributed to the overall success of the operation was his ability to analyse critically work presented to him, this was needed given the wide-ranging plans he was presented. The other commander, Montgomery also had personal traits that aided overall success. He also showed a great ability to take a problem and analyse the information provided critically. Montgomery had one trait which no other commander showed, which was beneficial in a coalition, he knew when to stop presenting his case and follow the orders of his superiors. The direct opposite is General Clark, who was persistent in presenting his case and did not stop; this caused the communication between Clark and his subordinates to become clouded. Many have written on how to lead people and to gain cooperation, but it takes a certain trait to understand when to follow despite actual or perceived problems. The last case study presented was a peacekeeping

operation in the Balkans. It was evident, that despite changes in the conduct of operations, some personal traits remained essential.

Clark proved to be deft at handling the politicians of the different coalition partners and of NATO. His understanding of the importance of this and practiced technique was essential in keeping a unified approach from the NATO governments. He had difficulties that were attributable to a personal trait. Known for his drive he failed to see his own countries needs and include them in his discussions. This caused him to lose the confidence of his superiors who were worried he was not representing his own countries requirements. Jackson was also adept at understanding the requirements of coalition partners and this proved effective in unifying the different nations. He was also able to take his extensive education and put it to good use when he was required to analyse critically the desires of his commander. In the situation, he ensured continued coalition success by identifying the best course of action for all concerned.

In recapping these traits, it has become clear that there have been three personal traits worth examining further. The ability to think critically about information provided; an ability to communicate intentions, concepts and requirements; and an understanding of others would appear to be useful to ensure success in a coalition force. The next step in analysing this information is to see if there was any common basis for the traits development in the commanders.

### **How did they Get These Traits?**

Throughout the case studies, three recurring traits stood out as influential. Having identified the traits it is worthwhile to see if there was any commonality in the way that commanders developed them.

The first of the traits was a developed ability to think critically. It was evident in all of the commanders and developed out of the education that they received. The actual education differed for all of them but there was a recurring theme to this. They all attended post-graduate schools and the majority of them also taught at this level, coming back to the schools as instructors. In the British Army, it appears to be a prerequisite for higher-level promotion and a key to creating coalition success. Why this trait is a key deserves some thought. The reason that the British bring their best back as instructors is twofold. First, they believe in using only the best instructors in educating others. This does not mean the best available rather they see it as above all else and demand that the best be sent back to teach others. Secondly, the instructors not only teach but also learn from their students. It is widely accepted that at the Staff College, people will offer different viewpoints, dealing with these from multiple students challenges the instructor to exercise their mind in order to ensure success. The last point is valid for all the commanders, each had a situation that challenged them academically and this developed in them the ability to think critically.

The second trait was the ability to communicate intentions, concepts and requirements effectively. This was again something that the majority used to great effect in commanding a coalition. It was also a trait that some did not have and proved to be a hindrance to their ability to command a coalition. The background to how this developed was different for most of the commanders. Some had to develop good communication skills because they were instructors and to be effective this was a requirement. Others developed it due to the differences in languages spoken, be they cultural (Eisenhower and the defence industry) or spoken languages (Slim and the Gurkhas). The ability to communicate was not only demonstrated orally but also in the written word such as with Slim and Eisenhower. These men were highly effective

in developing arguments and clearly getting the information over to others. With all of the commanders who were effective communicators, the demonstrated need came about because in a coalition there were national and coalition aims and interests at the strategic, operational and tactical level. Ensuring that there was no friction in the relationship was necessary when one course of action was preferred over another. This ensured that everyone had the same information and understood the reasoning behind choices.

The final trait common across the commanders was the ability to understand others. This may appear to be common sense but in all organisations, particularly the military there is a natural tendency to believe in your own way being the correct or only way. When leading others from different organisations and cultures, people need to be aware of these differences in order to minimise the natural enmity that occurs when people with disagreements have to work together. If people have no experience in situations where they are different and another culture is predominant, it is difficult for them to develop any empathy for others. In any military coalition the differences are usually at both the organisation and cultural level, the need to understand that partners think and act differently, and the power to utilise this to best advantage are fundamental to success in any coalition now and in the future.

Now that the traits, and how they developed, have been identified, a review of what we have today and the issues that this is causing will preface a discussion on where changes need to be considered to ensure that commanders of tomorrow have the necessary skills to lead coalitions of the future.



## **Where do we Stand Today?**

Most observers agree that amongst Western nations, the preference in any future conflict is to have a partner, necessitating some form of coalition. The two reasons generally given are firstly economic, few countries want to support the entire cost of a conflict. Secondly, there are political advantages to having support in any future conflict due to the potential repercussions at the United Nations. Having identified this, how effective is the current preparation of commanders of today for this situation?

A quick look at officer training in the U.S. reveals that today the perfect officer is one who is a master of all trades. Simply put, the system is trying to ensure that the training given to commanders prepares them for every potential and this is to the detriment of the commander. In prescribing that people learn all about everything, the commander of today is a function of built up competencies. What is happening is that the commander is not able to develop fully any of these competencies. Neither does the system require people to demonstrate adept skill in a competency rather completion of the initial requirement appears to be the necessity.

A dilemma is developing where the time being devoted to ensuring that they have addressed a wide range of competencies is taking away time, which should be used to develop those skills needed to better prepare them for coalition operations. To achieve a balance between preparing commanders in tactics and techniques pertinent to future conflicts and the challenges of coalition command, the traits identified need to be taught and developed in commanders of the future. They have proven robust enough to work in different situations and in differing coalitions.

In adopting these personal traits, future commanders will have a strong grounding in key personal traits required to lead coalitions and thus be successful in future coalition operations. A plan on how to develop the traits in future commanders is the next aspect to look at.

### **What do we Need for Tomorrow?**

All of the individuals identified in the case studies were at or near the pinnacle of their careers. They developed the traits they had over the course of their entire careers. If the commanders of the future are to use the traits identified, then there needs to be a process through which they can develop similar traits. Some recurring methods have proved to be better in developing the required traits in the commanders. In training today for the operations of tomorrow, these methods form the nucleus of a plan for the development of commanders adept in commanding coalitions. The methods identified need time to ensure the traits are well developed and because of this span an officer's early to mid career. It follows, that any proposal to develop future commanders needs to encapsulate this. The career of a standard officer has three distinct phases, the junior officer covering the span of initial enlistment and career progression, the mid ranking officer covering specialisation and progress and the senior officers in command. The following recommendations for implementing training account for these career phases.

Junior officers, by their limited exposure to service life, are the best group to give different experiences. The case studies identified that exposure to situations that were out of the normal experiences of junior officers was crucial in development of future commanders. There was no specific situation identified, but if placed in a situation, which was very different to their compatriots, or they had not received

training in, this was beneficial in developing understanding of differences in people. So what can we do to help junior officers develop? The key element is exposure to different situations. Every opportunity that presents is vital, including any ad hoc ones that arise. Any opportunity to work with other government or coalition agencies has to be utilised. To give an example, when a unit is at its home base then commanders should use the opportunity to have junior officers work with local law and order or large non-government organisations to expose the officers to other methods of operating and to different ways of thinking about concepts. If deployed on operations or exercises then the opportunity to work with other militaries and agencies should be viewed as beneficial and not a hindrance. Finally, mandatory career courses for junior officers should be adapted to include these opportunities. Providing time in the courses to participate in a programme that has officers working with other government agencies such as police or other law enforcement will benefit junior officers. All of these highlight what opportunities there are for junior officers to develop their understanding of different situations.

The second element of junior officer training that needs to be developed is professional military training. In modern militaries, voluntary professional reading lists and writing competitions exist to develop those who are interested. These should be mandatory. A competition that exposes junior officers to reading and exercises writing abilities can only develop better skills in communication and an ability to think critically about issues. The ability to think critically, communicate effectively and understand others were all elements that were identified as valuable in coalition commanders. Instilling the seeds of these elements in junior officers is essential to ensure fully developed abilities when they become senior officers.

The next stage of development comes as a mid ranking officer. During this phase, the emphasis needs to be formal tertiary education. Most militaries already recognise this and mid ranking officers attend various military courses; this continues the development of communication skills and critical thinking. This can be improved upon and further understanding of others developed by a slight change in the present system. By utilising civilian universities and increasing the number of students on foreign courses, personnel would have greater opportunity to immerse themselves in other cultures. The concept of understanding can again be emphasised in the development of commanders of the future. There may be deficiencies in not attending military schools but these are not impossible to overcome. The necessity to continue the development of understanding of others, specifically in officers with potential for future command is critical. Following this education, a consolidation period in another government agency would also be beneficial.

The next element of development for mid ranking officers is in the post command period. Officers selected based on their superior performance in command and potential for future senior command should be the only officers who teach professional military education courses to fellow officers. This is vital to ensure that both the teacher and the student get the best possible experience. Having only the best teach ensures that the students receive a quality education and that the teachers continue their personal development. An officer who has had the benefit of further education and been challenged by working with other agencies and having to teach other officers will be better prepared for any future coalition operation.

The last stage of development is for the senior officers. Recognising that there is always something to learn, senior officers need to have an opportunity to participate in visiting fellowships at relevant academic institutions. This would immerse senior

officers in the same situations that were beneficial at the junior and mid ranks. It reinforces the continued development of understanding, communications skills and critical thinking, ensuring if they to lead a coalition then they will be well prepared.

Officers throughout history have been great commanders of coalitions, but through identifying what traits made them great, and how they developed these, a simple plan is achievable, to ensure that future commanders of coalitions benefit from their predecessors.

## CONCLUSION

Two factors stand out as decisive in determining the progression of any single nation towards waging war or conducting military operations. Firstly, the political ramifications particularly concerning a country's standing on the world stage. Secondly, the cost and the need to minimise this, particularly as costs increase. This has forced a realisation amongst countries that wars or military operations will no longer be an individual state versus a state. Rather, future wars will be a coalition of nations waging war or conducting military operations against a protagonist. Coalitions bring together forces for a common end, but often have considerable differences on the methods to achieve this. Commanding such a coalition takes particular personal traits that are neither well understood nor developed in commanders today. By analysing previous coalition commanders and identifying, what personal traits made them successful; the results can develop coalition commanders of the future.

The three case studies chosen were the Northern Front of the Burma Campaign of World War II (WWII), the race for the German Border post Normandy in the European Campaign of WWII, and the Peace Keeping operations in Kosovo in 1999. These three operations highlighted different aspects of coalition command. In choosing them, any recurring personal traits identified are traits potentially beneficial to future coalition commanders. By drawing on the lessons learnt, the development of future leadership programmes will also benefit.

The personal traits that were significant in assisting the coalition commanders achieve success were recurrent in all the operations chosen. Although the traits deduced came from a comparative historical analysis of case studies, a recent academic paper "Revitalising America's Military Officer Corps" also anecdotally

identified similar traits.<sup>1</sup> From the research I conducted, the first significant trait was the ability to understand differences in partners of a coalition. This is important as there are no two identical nations in the world, any partner will have their own perceptions, requirements or methodology of a particular situation. These are sometimes points of animosity or friction between partners, which reduce the overall effectiveness of any coalition. Commanders need to be the person who overcomes these however; if they are not perceptive enough to understand the differences, then they will be unable to exploit the benefits of a coalition. This understanding was most obvious in Slim and Eisenhower who used it to great effect in overcoming problems within their coalitions.

The second personal trait identified was the ability to communicate intentions, concepts and requirements effectively. In coalitions, a common understanding between all partners is essential to achieve a common aim. If different parts of a coalition have different perceptions of the intent of the commander due to any misunderstanding of orders, potentially dangerous situations may arise. Understanding the order and intent of the commander is essential. As identified in Slim's conduct of the Northern Front operation and by Eisenhower and Montgomery in Europe good communication skills were beneficial to assisting confused situations. Stilwell showed the opposite and his bad communication skills inhibited coalition operations around him.

The last personal trait identified was the ability of a commander to think critically about information presented to them. For the same reasons that understanding is beneficial in a coalition so is this trait important. As different

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1. John A. Nagl and Brian M. Burton, *Keeping the Edge: Revitalizing America's Military Officer Corps* (Center for a New American Security Report, 04 February 2010).

elements of a coalition present information, requirements and plans a commander not versed in critical thinking may miss opportunities if they only ever take familiar paths. Just as understanding smooths friction points, critical thinking develops commanders to look at all perspectives of an issue or plan. Coalition partners have varying solutions to issues and a commander who identifies the best is going to benefit his coalition the most. Critical thinking was a trait of all of the commanders studied in the case studies. They all used it effectively to ensure success in their various operations.

Identifying how these personal traits developed in the individual commanders was part of the case studies. In drawing conclusions from this study, the aim was to see if there were worthwhile repeatable experiences. The analysis identified few specific cases, but there seemed to be a series of generalities in the development of personal traits in the commanders. These formed the basis for a suggested plan to ensure that coalition commanders of the future are properly prepared.

Providing commanders for coalition operations is an essential part of future operations. The development of the identified personal traits will enhance their ability to conduct coalition operations successfully. The development needs to begin with junior officers to ensure they are prepared for the future. Although no specific plan was detailed the benefits of exposure to other organisations and ways of thinking was considered to be of utmost importance. This exposure is a tenet of developing the understanding necessary to be successful in a coalition. Commanders need to encourage this at every opportunity to set the foundation of any future opportunities. Developing a mandated professional education early in a career is also beneficial to junior officers as it develops both communication skills and sets the basis for critical thinking.



Progressing through a career mid ranking officers need to have their education formalised but the opportunity to use this to also continue developing an understanding of others should not be lost. What is most important is that those selected to teach others in professional military courses are the best. This will ensure that the students only ever get the best but the exposure also develops the teacher. It was evident from the case studies that challenging environment of teaching others honed the critical thinking skills of the commanders.

Coalition operations are going to be the preferred option in future operations. The case studies conducted identified the personal traits used successfully by coalition commanders of the past. Developing similar traits in the commander of tomorrow is essential to ensure future success.

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## VITA

Commander Andrew Gordon, RAN is a Principal Warfare Officer (PWO) who has specialised in Gunnery and Air Warfare. He joined the Royal Australian Navy as an 18 year old Midshipman as part of the initial class of the Australian Defence Force Academy in 1986. During his time at the Academy he studied a Bachelor of Arts reading History from the University of New South Wales. Graduating from the Academy in 1988 his initial postings followed the normal pattern of junior seaman officer training.

Sent on an extremely enjoyable twelve month exchange to HMCS *Mackenzie* in Esquimalt, Canada, for the final part of his training he received his Bridge Watchkeeping Certificate in 1991. On return to Australia he joined HMAS *Perth* prior to Principal Warfare Officer training in 1994 and 1995. Following a posting as the Gunnery then Operations Officer in HMAS *Newcastle*, he briefly resided in Maritime Headquarters. In 1998, on promotion to Lieutenant Commander, he joined HMAS *Hobart* as Gunnery Officer. He remained in that position until 1999 when he joined the Directing Staff of the PWO Faculty HMAS *Watson*. In 2002 he was posted to HMAS *Warramunga* where he spent an enjoyable two years as Executive Officer. On promotion to Commander in January 2005 he took up a posting in the Operations Branch in Headquarters Joint Operations Command. In February 2006 he was posted to HMAS *Cerberus* where he spent an entertaining time as the Executive Officer.

He was posted in Command of *Warramunga* 23 November 2007. Spending a rewarding time in Command, he had the honour of Commanding *Warramunga* on an operational deployment to the Middle East Area of Operations.

A very keen sportsman, Commander Gordon is actively involved in hockey, owns a set of golf clubs in whose company he is often seen looking for golf balls and he also enjoys cricket. His other hobbies are varied. He has also completed a Masters of Business and Technology from the University of New South Wales.